

STORIES FOR CHILDREN

WRITTEN FOR THE SALT LAKE HERALD BY WALT McDUGALL

Little Jack Meader's Runaway Voyage to Oompaloolooland and the Wonderful Menagerie He Brought Back With Him

LITTLE Jack Meader had read all the fairy tales that had ever been written, and a lot that had never been printed.

He could tell the difference between an ogre, a giant, a fairy and a spirit; he knew by name all the princesses and princes of fairy lore, notwithstanding they were told about in all sorts of languages, while dragons, mermaids and witches were all at his fingers' ends. Blue Beard, Jack the Giant-Killer, Aladdin, Sinbad the Sailor, Cinderella, Silverlocks, Rumpelstitchkin, Red Riding-Hood, Goldilocks and dozens of others were as well known to him as his own school-fellows, and he was sick and tired of them all. Jack wondered why all the fairy stories were filled with all sorts of impossible wonders that never existed in any part of the world, for being young, he was not averse to the fact that there were wonderful things right in the forests of Oompaloolooland than were ever written or told in any fairy story.

All the fables put together cannot equal a night's experience in this remarkable forest, and when Jack had been through only a small part of it he was quite ready to admit that the fairy time of which I am telling you he had never even heard of the forest, and he used to sit and mope because there were no wonderful things in the world outside of fairy tales, in which he had lost faith completely.

When school was over he used to lie in the grass and wish that he had been born in ancient times when knights wore armor instead of camel-hair underclothes and fought great battles for some fair lady; but he forgot that if he had been born so long ago he would have gone in constant dread of fairies, witches and dragons and at a time when there was no glass in the windows and such things as varnishes and goblins were about; everybody was kept awake half the night listening and starting in alarm at little noises that wouldn't keep a terror dog awake, and you know that it doesn't take much to do that.

Would be a Pirate

When I tell you that Jack had grown so queer that he really did not believe in Santa Claus, you will see what a funny boy he was. He used to plan to be a pirate and sail to the Caribbean Sea and take a great Spanish galleon, but his father said he would have to go into his shop when he got through school and learn to be a workman there. Now, as his father was a manufacturer of artificial sausage-skins, Jack did not like to think of learning the trade, and so one day he resolved to run away and go to sea, for that would be the first step toward piracy.

He packed up his sweater, his slingshot, his fish-line, two or three handkerchiefs and a new pair of shoes—these he took, and taking all the money out of his savings bank, thirty-seven cents, he started for the wharves where all kinds of ships were lying. He walked along the river front looking for the very largest and handsomest ship, intending to select that one in which to be a cabin-boy, for he knew that was the way all pirates begin.

He came at last to a very large, black ship, which seemed to him to look more like a pirate ship than any of them. He did not know how to get on board at first, but after dodging in and out among the carts, boxes and barrels that crowded the wharf, he found the gangway and going aboard asked to see the captain. He was taken to that officer, who was a very three-looking man, and he asked him if he wanted a cabin-boy. The captain was so angry at being interrupted in his work by such a small boy, that he shouted to the boatswain to throw Jack into the Gooboo's cage, which frightened the boy so that he fled from the ship in such haste that he almost fell overboard going down the gang-plank.

He was a little bit discouraged at his reception on that ship, but he picked out another, a nice white vessel, at the next wharf, but a man who was cleaning the ship threatened to hit him with a greasy mop when he asked to see the captain to learn if he needed a cabin-boy. He went from ship to ship, but in never a one did he find that a boy was needed, or if one was needed there were so many other boys waiting for the job that he could not get near the ship.

He was far down the river and there seemed to be nothing there but canal boats. Yet he resolved not to give up, and decided to stay there all night. He saw on the street facing the river a large house with a sign in front "Seaman's Rest. Lodging twenty-five cents," and he made up his mind to stay there all night for the streets were so full of men who looked like pirates that he was afraid to be out there all alone, and he began to think that, perhaps, pirates were not as nice as he had expected to find them. He went into the lodging-house and asked the proprietor for a room.

Bag-Devouring Goobos

A fat old man with a very red face, surrounded with bristly white whiskers sat by the window and glared at Jack from under his bushy eyebrows, and said, in a loud voice: "Aha, you are running away from home, I know it! I can see it in your face! What have you got in that bundle?"

"Clothes, sir," said Jack, a little bit frightened.

"You want to go to sea and be a cabin-boy, don't you?"

Jack was surprised that the old man guessed his object so easily, but answered: "Yes, sir."

"Ha, I knew it. Every boy that comes on this street is trying to run away to sea. I counted over two hundred this very day!"

Jack was disappointed as he thought what little chance there was for him if two hundred boys a day were running away to sea.

He watched the old man fill his pipe with tobacco, and the tears came into his eyes when he thought that after all he must have to return and become a sausage-skin maker in his father's shop.

"You know what becomes of all these boys?" suddenly asked the old man, blowing forth a great cloud of pungent smoke into Jack's eyes.

"I suppose they become cabin-boys," stammered Jack.

"Not a bit of it!" shouted the old man, pounding the window with a force that made the glass rattle. "They are taken on board the ships and fed to the wild untamable Goobos; that's what happens to them."

"What is a Gooboo?" asked Jack, timidly, thinking how narrowly he had escaped just such a fate.

"A Gooboo? why, a Gooboo," said the old man, "is a big, hairy animal what they catch in Borneo. Most every ship has one or two. Mine died last month, and I won't get another until I get back to Borneo. They feed 'em entirely on

small boys and tarred rope, mostly tarred rope, 'cause boys are scarce, there being so many ships in, just now."

Jack was now grateful that he escaped being fed to the Gooboo, and he determined to return home, but the captain suddenly asked: "Do you want to go to sea with me?"

Jack hesitated for a moment, but the thought of the sausage-skins coming back, he replied that he did desire to follow the occupation of a sailor.

"Well, I'll take you," said the old man. "I am Captain Squibb of the Gay Meadowlark, and I sail to-morrow morn for the golden land of savages and ostriches. Old Oompaloolooland. I need a boy, and you look like a good lad."

"Where is Oompaloolooland?" asked Jack, for this name, he was sure, wasn't in his geography.

"On the other side of the world," replied Captain Squibb, "and it takes two or three months to get there if we have favoring breezes. The Gay Meadowlark is a fast ship, and we lose no time except when we get stuck in the doldrums of the sea of Sargasso."

Jack looked as though he'd ask what

first became acquainted with the fourth

mate, who was a very tall man named

Patrick Kelly, a Swede, and who told him

that he had been the cabin-boy on the

last voyage, but the voyage had lasted

so long that he came back a grown man

with whiskers a foot in length.

Jack hoped that this voyage would not

be of such a length, as his grandmother

was not feeling well when he left home,

and he was old to get home before she

died of old age, but Patrick, looking at

the sky, said: "If this wind holds out it

will take a month or two off the trip,

and," he added, "we might get back with-

in a year."

The ship was loaded with a cargo of po-

tatoes and onions, vinegar, oil, parsley,

pickles and feather-dusters, which were

to be sold to the savages for hair orna-

ments. Jack's duties on board were only

to make the captain's bed, clean the cabin

and the dishes and the windows and the

brasswork and the knives, fill the cap-

tain's pipe, feed the dog and cat, wind

the clock, holystone the deck, water the

plants, shine the shoes, brush the cap-

tain's clothes, beat the carpet, bring up

coal, make the fire and look out for

squalls, so that, you see, he had plenty

of time to learn all about the ship and

how to sail her.

At last the hilly shores of Oompalool-

land, crowned with waving cocoanut and

date-palms, bread-fruit trees, banana,

orange, tamarind and fig trees were vi-

sible in the distance. Their arrival was

well timed, for it is only at the season of

the year in which they arrived that the

ice could be approached, for during the

rest of the year the sea is frozen solid

for many miles from land and the cold

is so intense that the flame of a

candle is frozen stiff and is used as an

arrow-point by the fur-dig hunters.

At the time they arrived it was mid-

summer in Oompalooland, and was so

hot that the hens laid hard-boiled eggs

and the bread-fruit trees dropped hot

rolls every morning. The ship was wel-

comed by an enormous number of sa-

vages headed by King Oompanga, and

came to anchor right in front of the

King's palace. When the inhabitants

were presented with samples of the po-

tato-salad they went wild with delight,

brought bags of gold dust, pearls,

diamonds, ostrich-feathers and ivory to

exchange for the delicious dish, and in a

very few days the captain had sold out

the entire cargo and began to look about

him for some strange animals to take

home on the return voyage.

Every one of the crew was entitled to

take home as many animals as he wished

as his share of the voyage, and Jack de-

termined to procure the rarest and most

wonderful creatures that Oompalooland

afforded, instead of monkeys, anti-

eat, armillidolles or Mongooses, which

were easily obtained, and which the oth-

ers were satisfied to take. King Oom-

panga took a great fancy to Jack because

his hair was red, something never before

seen in the land. He called him "Walk-

ing Torch," and said he lighted up the

palace better than a cocoanut-oil lamp,

and he took him with him into the

mountain forest, where they hunted and

captured such remarkable animals that Jack

knew he would become famous as well as

rich upon his return with them to Amer-

ica.

The first that he caught was the Gazoza

bird-fish. This creature, which no natu-

ralist can assign to its element, it being

equally at home in the air, the water or

on land, is an animal with fishlike scaly

body, feathered wings and hairy legs with

claws, and it is a wonderful sight to see

it come darting up to the surface of the

water, swim about leisurely and then fly

up and perch upon a Taloia tree and be-

come the color of a fire oyster, but it be-

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